THE BUILDERS OF LEAMINGTON.

TO THE EDITOR.

SIR,—I was forcibly struck with your remarks last week respecting the builders of the famed town of Leamington, and am sorry they are too true, and not as regards Leamington only, but of almost every town in England more or less. I remember calling upon a timber merchant in Hull a few years ago, when he made a remark to the same effect. He spoke of Leamington as well as other places, and he said "A few years back the builders were a highly respectable class of people, but now we are almost afraid to deal with them."

Now, Sir, things ought not to be in this condition. I am well satisfied they are not deficient in either moral principle or moral courage; a more laborious class of men cannot be found; they have not merely to stand behind their counters to supply their customers, but their moral and physical capacities are tried to the uttermost. But, Sir, there is a cause, and that, with your permission, I will endeavour to explain, and point out a few remedies.

You are well aware, Sir, the builders in general are men brought out of the ranks, as there are few parents of affluence who apprentice their sons to the trades of a carpenter, bricklayer, or mason, they being too laborious and too much exposed to the inclemency of the weather; and as these are the branches from whence the builders spring, it follows as a matter of course they have but limited means to commence business with, but in general something far better, *industry and enterprise*; with these they set sail, and encounter and overcome many a storm, and if they were willing to stand upon these resources within themselves, they would seldom fail; but over-anxious to make haste and get rich, too many have listened to some money-lending concern, they have taken hold of a false capital, launched out further than they ought to have done, and in many cases where they have been just on the turning point, a whisper has gone abroad, such a person is in difficulties, and down he has gone.

Another, perhaps a greater evil, has been the great competition which has existed of late years. The over-anxious desire in individuals has been to carry on a large trade, and, Sir, every one must be aware, if carried to excess, of the consequences that will follow. If, for instance, as is frequently the case, say six persons compete for a job, the highest will be say 2,000*l.*, and the lowest 1,500*l.* How can these things be? there must be something wrong, and in how many cases have such broken down before their jobs have been complete, themselves Gazetted, and their families in want, whilst good and useful members to society have been lost and died in despair.

In order to avoid these calamities, it would be well for every young man commencing business to let his steps be slow and sure; if temptation presents itself, ponder the matter well over. If, for instance, a gentleman has a piece of ground suitable for building purposes, and is willing to let it on building leases, and advance a certain amount of capital, let him take care how he makes his bargain; take plenty of time to cover the ground, and not pay a farthing ground-rent until it is covered; the mere ground itself is scarcely worth any thing, and therefore why ought it to be paid for? I almost every day see a similar case. A gentleman had a piece of ground of this description, which he let out for five pair of villas, to be erected thereon at a ground-rent, I believe, of 80*l.* per annum, to commence at first: three pair were built and covered in, and the others commenced; the gentleman advanced about 2,000*l.*, and there they stand, and have been some years, the builder a bankrupt, and the gentleman minus interests, ground-rent, and, I am afraid, capital too, if he does not soon finish them himself, or give them somebody else to finish. Now, Sir, I think with proper precaution all this may be avoided.

As regards competition, I have no objection to it if it be carried on on honourable principles; I think it right for a gentleman to know what a building will cost, and to get it done in the best manner, and I think it stimulates the builder to make the best of his bargain, only let it be done on right principles: first ascertain the exact quantities of labour and material required, then go to the best markets to purchase them, and then put on a price that will pay for them; I know one man can in many instances work lower than another, either by his superior knowledge or other causes, and he will have the advantage of them; let him, and let all others be honourably stimulated to overtake him, and we should have very few stoppings in the midst of a job, and gentlemen have to pay double for their works being completed. If you think this worthy a place in THE BUILDER, you will oblige by the insertion,

Your humble servant and well-wisher,

Richmond, Aug. 8, 1843. J. P. H.

POMPEIAN PAPER-HANGINGS.

TO THE EDITOR.

SIR,—THE BUILDER has, from the commencement, been my companion at the tea-table on the Saturday evenings of publication: and in the last number I read the correspondence of the professional gentlemen, "Peregrine, B.A.A.D.," as relating to the "excellence" of the paper-hangings, which he describes as the faithful representations of the "Pompeian" and "Herculanean" decorations.

Relying on your impartiality, I beg to submit a few remarks on the subject of the note of your correspondent. "Peregrine" tells us that he saw them in the manufactory, and, I think, that it is much to be regretted that he did not see them in some suit of rooms in which they had been used; then, I believe, he would not have given an opinion so opposed to almost every person who had written on the subject of architecture as applied to domestic purposes. The workman who makes the description of papers to which he alludes, seldom or never sees the rooms for which they are intended, and if he were perfectly informed in this, it would not be of the least advantage, because the process of printing is invariable: he cannot reverse the shade—neither can he diminish nor enlarge the pattern to suit the compartments, so that the rooms, when they are said to be completed, constitute a piece of inconsistency and patchwork. The only method by which decorative paper-hangings can be executed with correctness is by working according to the preliminary of having the plan and elevations of the apartments for which they are intended; otherwise they must, of necessity, be nothing superior to base counterfeits of the originals.

Now there are paper-hangings made, to a very great extent, on the principle which I have mentioned; perhaps "Peregrine" would like to see and judge for himself: therefore, I beg to refer him to the works of Mr. Norwood, Messrs. Archer and Taverner; I might mention several others, but I think these sufficient; and I have no doubt he will consider himself amply remunerated, after inspection, for the perambulation which he might take for that purpose.

Mr. Pugin's remarks are, I think, well worth attention here: in speaking of paper-hangings, he says, "those papers which are shaded are defective in principle; for as a paper is hung round a room, the ornament must frequently be shadowed on the light side." Again, "flock-papers are admirable substitutes for the ancient hangings; but then they must consist of patterns without shadow."

Respecting flock-papers, I will here take the liberty to say, that at an early opportunity, and having your permission, I will explain the method which I use for flocking ceilings or walls. The whole space may be covered with ease, or it may be introduced with great advantage in ornamental representations of large dimensions, as the unsightly appearance of seam or join is entirely avoided.

I am, Mr. Editor, your most obedient servant,

JOHN BARR.

INSTITUTE OF THE FINE ARTS.

A GENERAL meeting and *conversazione* of the members and friends of the above institute was held on Sunday evening at Willis's Rooms, St. James's, and was numerously and highly respectably attended. In the course of the evening Mr. Wyse, M.P., delivered a short but able address, explanatory of the objects of the institution, which is to unite, by intellectual and social means, the interests of artists, and to attempt to establish a free and liberal intercourse between the patrons, the lovers of art, and its professors. Mr. Wyse declared his entire approval of the design, which, indeed, the honourable gentleman has been hitherto chiefly instrumental in carrying out, and avowed his intention of continuing to co-operate with the institution by every means in his power. He impressed upon artists the benefits to be derived from union, and exhorted all to lay aside prejudices and exclusive partialities. At the conclusion of the address, which was received with the warmest sympathy by all present, a very clever and learned paper by Mr. E. V. Rippingille, upon "the causes and circumstances which favour and oppose the progress of art," was read, and elicited much approbation. The company entertained themselves with the various objects of art and vertu which were profusely spread about the rooms, and many of which were highly interesting and curious.

PASSING THOUGHTS.

I.

IT would be an interesting subject, if well carried out, to note the praises which have been bestowed upon our art, not only by historians, antiquarians, and others, but even by poets, a fact which proves how highly honourable every branch of the profession is, and how esteemed their labours are. Milton, without doubt, had the very soul of an artist in him. Thomson is allowed to have been the best informed upon the arts of all our poets. Pope's lines on Sir J. Vanbrugh evince that he knew something about it:—

> Lie heavy on him earth, for he
> Laid many a heavy weight on thee.

Somerville in the "Chase" describes the situation, extent, and arrangement of a kennel

> Let no Corinthian pillar prop the dome
> A vain expense, on charitable deeds
> Better disposed, to clothe the tatter'd wretch,
> Who shrinks beneath the blast, to feed the poor,
> Pinched with afflictive want: for use, not state,
> Gracefully plain, let each apartment rise.

It is rather a "feather in the cap" of the profession, that Chaucer, the father of English poetry, was also a clerk of works of all the royal palaces, with a salary of two shillings a day; his poetry, therefore, will be found to smack heartily of architecture. His descriptions of castles are always gorgeous:—

> For riche gere of fine gold,
> A thousand fanes ate turning.
> And of a sute were all the towres,
> Portrayed carven after flowres:
> Ther was many a small turret pight.

—*Chaucer's "Dreme."*

Shakspeare, Gray, Bentham, Scott, and all our poets of any note, have all been indebted to architecture for many of their descriptions, and this predilection of theirs fully bears out our respected Professor's assertion that "The art might be termed the epitome of civilization, the first fruit of social order and combination, of every discovery in science, and of every conception in beauty."

II.

The two following epitaphs, one on an architect, the other on a builder, may possibly serve to amuse some portion of your readers. They are singular on account of their quaintness, and may be interesting because they appertain to the "shop."

A SPEAKING STONE.

> Reason may chance to blame,
> But did it know
> Those ashes here doth lie
> Which brought the stones
> That hide the steeple's shame,
> It would affirm
> There were no reason why
> Stones should not speak
> Before their Builder die,
> For here John Warren
> Sleeps among the dead,
> Who with the church
> His own life finished.
> Anno Domini 1608,
> December 17th.

It may be necessary here to remark that this epitaph is in St. Mary's Church, at Cambridge, the tower of which church was not built for more than fifty years after the other part of the church, and which explains the meaning of the line "That hide the steeple's shame."

The following is upon an architect of Newcastle: he built the Guildhall and Exchange, and also Gateshead Church, in which churchyard he lies buried.

> Here lies Robert Trollope,
> Who made yon stones roll up;
> When death took his soul up,
> His body filled this hole up.

J. L. C.

At a recent meeting of the committee charged to superintend the completion of the Cathedral of Cologne, Archbishop de Geissel stated that he had received a letter from the King of Bavaria, announcing that he had directed his representative at the Germanic Diet to present a proposition to the other members, calling on each to engage to pay some certain sum every year until the edifice was completely finished. Should this proposition, as he hoped, be acceded to, the king undertook to contribute 10,000 florins a-year from his privy purse during his lifetime, and he had no doubt that his successor would continue the same contribution.

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